



*JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017*

Dear Sisters,

Best wishes to you for a new year overflowing with good deeds!

On the first day of January, we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace. This year's theme is "Non-Violence: A Style of Politics for Peace." The Holy Father asks that all people operate, in whatever ways that are open as possibilities for them, to negotiate for and to find pathways to peace, even where such roadways appear dangerous and impractical. He calls us to adopt a political method based on the primacy of Human Rights that assure equal dignity to every human being and save each one from discrimination and distinctions that deny people that experience of equality. It builds a realistic way of overcoming armed conflicts, in as much those involved can ultimately acknowledge the the strength, or power, of a Right, rather than the right of strength, or the powerful. Non-violence prioritizes respect for the culture and identity of each people, and recognizes the primacy of diplomacy over an increase in arms. The illegal trafficking of arms is actually responsible for many current conflicts throughout the world.

This is ours to do: pray, so that peace may reign in our hearts, in our families, and in our world!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Sr. M. Rosalinda

## *FIVE KOREANBENEFACTORS VISIT THE COMMUNITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES*

Sister Lucia accompanied five Korean benefactors to the Philippine Islands from November 22-26, 2016. When they first arrived, they visited the Sisters' community at Tagaytay where they enjoyed the Sisters' and novices' welcome and hospitality. In Novaliches, at the 'Mission House,' they were welcomed by the children who, while at table, told their stories to their guests. The children then entertained their visitors with some of the typical dances of their country. After that, their visitors were brought to Mahogany, where the Formation House will be built.

These visitors were very moved by the joy with which these Sisters live in such situations of poverty.



"Children at Mission House"

These benefactors reflected on the good that the Sisters could do if they had more to give, and pondered about what they could share with the Sisters. They decided to commit themselves to finding new benefactors so that they could provide food for the children for the whole year.

This voyage made these visitors happy to be part of our family and benefactors of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi. We share this with gratitude to our Lord!

Sr. Lucia Lee



# MEETING OF THE MISSIONARY ANIMATORS IN ROMANIA



*"A moment of celebration"*

The Sisters who are Missionary Animators of Saint Francis Province in Romania met at the Community of Valea Mare from October 21 -23 to take the pulse of the missionary activity going on this year. With Pope Francis' Message for the 2016 World Day of Mission in hand, the Sisters noted that "we are all invited to 'go out' as missionary disciples: each one is to serve by using her particular talents, her own creativity, her specific wisdom and experience in order to carry, to the whole human family, the tenderness and the compassion of God." On Sunday, October 23, the Sisters organized a moment of prayer in Saint Mark Parish in Cleja, a village close to Bacau. This moment consisted of their animating the recitation of the Rosary, Mass, and an Hour of Adoration for mission lands and missionaries. Together with the children, youth and all of the faithful of the Parish, the Sisters prayed for all of the continents in the world. All took part in reaching out to the whole world through prayer, as each one of us is called to participate in the mission of the Church in the world through our Baptism. The Pastor, Father Anton Diacu explained, in his homily, that each person's mission begins at Baptism and continues throughout his or her life. With that Sunday's liturgical readings in mind, Father exhorted these faithful to pray, since prayer is a fundamental value of every missionary's life. Just as the mission of the Apostles flowed from the feet of the Cross, from Calvary, the decorations representing the five continents, in their five specific colors, spread out from the foot of the altar during this Day of Prayer.

As all gathered prayed, in adoration, for peace in the world, one lit candle, representing the victory of Christ over anger and sin, through His Resurrection, was placed before the Blessed Sacrament. A cross symbolized forgiveness and the Father's mercy for the whole world. A flower served as a symbol of life and the tenderness of God's love.

"The Gospel mandate, 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I commanded you' (Matthew 28:19-20) is not over. Rather, it calls all of us to commit to work within the present scenarios and the actual challenges. We are to feel called to renew our missionary 'going out.'" Called forth by these words of our Holy Father, and after the Holy Hour, all of the faithful received the mission of praying for the needs of one of the continents. The 'mandate' that each received, as a sign, with the words of a prayer and a small loaf of bread, represented the bread of the poor and food that each one needs each day. The faithful were exhorted to share that bread with the elderly and the sick who had remained at home, thereby bringing them into communion with the whole Church.

Let us thank God for the communion that we experienced together with the faithful of this parish. May we continue to pray together for the missions and the missionaries throughout the whole world.

*Sr. Tereza Istoc e Sr. Laura-Marina Plesca*

# ONE OF THE IMPORTANT THEMES WITH REGARD TO JUSTICE IS: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in Rome, the Pontifical Foundation *Aid to the Church in Need* (ACN) had presented the XIII Edition of the “Report on Religious Freedom in the World”. The report described the degree of religious freedom that every religious group enjoys and has enjoyed in every country worldwide, from June 2014 to June 2016. Consequently, discriminations and persecutions were brought to light, of which the various communities (not only Christian communities) are victims.

*In conclusion the report stated: “more than 70% of the world’s population lives in areas which have serious limitations to religious freedom”. From the 196 countries that were analysed, 38 revealed serious signs of systematic violations of religious freedom.*



From one year to another, the ACN’s “report on religious freedom in the world” – like access reflectors on violations by the state and fundamentalists – was imposed by Church people, diplomats, politicians and journalists, and it is quoted among the activities of the Holy See, by the National Parliamentary Commissions and by the European Union. It is compiled by experts who are coordinated by an International Commission of the Aid to the Church in Need, thanks also to the information that comes from local sources, who are constantly in contact with the Pontifical Foundation.

From the speakers of the presentation, it was highlighted that: “a report is one of the instruments for sustaining the persecuted communities through projects”; the “ACN’s report is necessary in giving ‘a wake-up call’ on the theme of persecution. The introduction was given by the Director of ACN-Italia Alessandro Monteduro, who, in merit to the respect of religious freedom, affirmed that “the worst situation is with regard to North Korea”. The “maglia nera” of this year’s report goes to this country. What we only know is that, it’s not possible for any religious group to exercise their faith”. From the 196 Nations that were examined in the report, the Director continues, “there are 38 that find themselves in the most difficult situations. Among these, 23 are subjected to the most cruel persecutions: 12 by the state and 11 by radical military groups. The other 15 countries can be placed between the ambit of discrimination and persecution. Lastly, seven are those countries where classification is even difficult to imagine, and therefore, these are countries where religious freedom is in serious danger: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Siria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Northern Nigeria and North Korea”. In conclusion, a report, “is an instrument for restoring hope to those who are persecuted through our projects”.

The international president of ACN, Card. Mauro Piacenza, in his speech affirmed that “religious freedom must be preserved in every juridical system; in particular, the modern democracies should not be founded on relativism, on the contrary, they should be founded on respect of religious freedom, which must be rediscovered in the public forum

Thereafter, there was the speech of the Constitutional Judge Giuliano Amato, in which he affirmed that: at the root of fundamentalism there is extreme secularization which aims at eradicating religion, and which generates a reaction of identity; repressing the religion would mean a distortion of the religious sentiment.” Extreme secularism, in essence, can facilitate a fundamentalist antireligious reaction.

During this time in which we are called to do in memory and to relive the First coming of Jesus, who was made man for us in order to share fully in our human nature, as we await His second coming, of His definitive return, when He will lead us to the embrace of the Father, let us pray and work for the sustenance of our persecuted brothers and sisters in faith and for every human being whose existence is threatened, so that God’s most precious gift, which is life, may always be respected and guarded in love.

**Caneo Maria Dolores**



# THE ORTHODOX COUNCIL: GOAL AND NEW BEGINNING



From 18<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016, during the orthodox's week of Pentecost, the "Holy and great Synod of the orthodox Church" was celebrated in the Island of Crete. Even though the media had ignored it, it dealt with an extraordinary and historical event with which the Orthodox Church had turned an important page of its story

The preparations for the Synod started in 1961 by Atenagora, the Patriarch of Constantinople, the protagonist of the memorable meeting with Pope Paul VI, which took place in Jerusalem on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1964. After centuries of fights and painful events, this meeting brought about the abrogation of the reciprocal excommunications which Rome and Constantinople had exchanged in 1054, the year of the eastern schism. From then onwards, the relations between the Catholic Church and the orthodox Church intensified even more, which contributed to the demolition of suspicions and prejudices, to heighten the knowledge, the mutual respect and fraternal collaboration in ecumenical dialogue and in some situations of social and civil involvement.

290 delegates who had been sent from 10 of the 14 independent Churches, had participated in the Council of Crete, whereas the Patriarchs of Russia, Antioch, Bulgaria and Georgia (who represent 70% of the 200 million of the orthodox faithful dispersed in the world) had decided not to participate, regardless of it being the first synod after the second Nicene Council (787), the last to be officially recognized by Constantinople. The Catholic Church was represented by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for the unity of Christians.

Although it was embittered by absences, Bartholomew was delighted by the harmony that was attained and by the message of unity that was offered to the world. The Council also published an Encyclical and a message which picked up the major themes that were dealt with in the six documents prepared by the assembly, rejoicing about the declaration of the unity of the orthodox Church. With regard to the ecumenical involvement, the Council affirmed: *"our Church, while responding to the need of witnessing to the truth and her apostolic faith, gives great importance to dialogue, especially with the non orthodox Christians"*

Among the various recognitions given to Bartholomew the Patriarch, another one was added on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016, on the feast of Saint Nicolas, in Bari. After his *lectio magistralis* (very beautiful), he received an ecumenical award "Saint Nicholas", an important notification which the Apuglian Theological faculty assigned to the catholic and orthodox personalities for the service rendered towards the promotion of the unity of Christians. The award is a reproduction of the unification lamp in silver and gold which burns perpetually in the crypt of the Basilica.

In conclusion, we can say the orthodox Council, which was held last June, was really a milestone from which hopes can be raised, hopes of important developments towards that full and visible unity for which Jesus prayed: *"May they all be one"* (Jn. 17:21).

*Sr. Bernaveta Ciobanu*

# A FEW EXCERPTS FROM POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE ON THE GLOBAL PRAYER DAY ABOUT THE CARE OF CREATION (9/1/2016).

**Let's be merciful about our "communal home".**

While introducing his message, our holy father expresses his gratitude to the European Ecumenical Assembly for its growing attention to the preservation of the creation's integrity. This attention prompted for a five-week celebration of "time of creation", from September 1st to October 4. During this time a number of significant initiatives should stem up, with the approval and support of the Global Council of the Churches.



*"Why don't we try to communicate?"*

## 1. The earth screams

God has given us a wonderful garden, but we are turning it into a polluted, barren land, covered in rubble and waste. (enc. "Laudato Si", 161). We cannot surrender or ignore the loss of bio-diversity and to the destruction of the eco-systems caused by our irresponsible and selfish behaviour. We are the ones to blame if

Thousands of species will not celebrate God's glory with their very existence, nor will they be able to pass on to us their message. We have no right to continue to do so. (ibid., 33). Climate change also contributes to the plight of forced migration. We should and will listen to the cry for help of the earth, as well as that of the poor (ibid., 49)

## 2....for we have sinned

God gave us the earth in order that we cultivate it and care for it (Gen., 2,15) with love, respect and restraint. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew courageously and repeatedly prophetically brought in full light our sins against the creation.

"We, the human beings are destroying God's creation; we, the human beings are damaging the earth's integrity and causing climate change. By depriving the earth of its forests and its precious humid areas. We, the human beings keep polluting seas and oceans, the soil and the very air we breathe. All these are sins."

We must commit ourselves to start taking important steps towards our ecological conversion. This means taking responsibility towards ourselves, the human society, the creation and the creator. (ibid. 10;229)

## 5. A new way to be merciful

In our Christian life we are bound to exercise the traditional deeds of mercy, both material and spiritual. "We usually consider these deeds one by one: we have hospitals for the sick, shelters for the homeless, meals for the hungry, schools for children needing to learn the necessary notions to walk the paths of life. We also assist in many ways those in need of spiritual counselling. But, if we try to see the concept of mercy in its wholeness, we see that the very core of it is human life in its totality."

This means caring for "our communal home" I would then suggest a complement to the traditional list of deeds of mercy, or the "care for our communal home" by the "grateful contemplation of the creation" and "the simple everyday gestures that can break the logic of violence, exploitation, greed, in order to build a better world."

Laudato si, amen  
May the Lord be praised.





# COMUNITÀ "SANTISSIMA TRINITÀ" - SERRAVALLE, REPUBBLICA SAN MARINO

Glory to the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"The sower went out to sow the seed." (Lk 8:5). This is how our charism and the presence of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi arrived in the "old country of liberty", the Republic of San Marino. It is a small country inside the Italian territory, but a country with Christian origins well rooted and with the spirit ready to continue



*Sr. Monica and her children*

the search to incarnate the human and christian values.

Our community has the Holy Trinity for its patron and protector. It came into existence on 01<sup>st</sup> October, 2010 and we are the second community in San Marino.

The fraternity is made up of three sisters: Sr Ana Veres, Sr Luminita Aiojoaiei, Sr Monica Mitricioae, and we live in an apartment above a nursery school belonging to the state.

Our apostolate varies and this allows us to see the unpredictable and marvelous way with what God wants of our life.

Beyond the house chores and the responsibility to fraternal life, we are also involved in parish work: catechesis with the children, animation of the liturgy and we have an old people's home near our house; we serve to take holy communion to the sick the first Fridays of the month and on Sundays.

One sister works as nurse in the home for the aged, the other is studying nursery teaching and is about to complete; the third sister works with "Carita Senza Confini" that collaborates with our institute in sustaining some of our missions.

At diocesan level, the in charge of the community is part of the USMI diocesan council serving as economa.

Our formation journey, of growth and updating, is enriched by the various meetings in which we participate, prepared at parish and diocesan level.

Surely, our presence is not by accident. This is confirmed by our brothers and sisters we meet and they request for our prayers. They confide in us their joys and sorrows or they simply share the faith journey. Without pretending to do greater things, we want to think that our presence is like a small light that checks to give light around it.

We are grateful in particular to divine Providence which comes to us in various forms. We are taken care of and we have lacked nothing. Truly God sends us people who are generous and available. They come and help us. They think of us and make us feel at home.

We continuously thank God who gives us the opportunity to render testimony of love and to meet Him in our brothers and sisters.

***Sr Ana, Sr Luminita, Sr Monica***



# ZAMBIA - "AT LAST A STRANGER"

"At last, am foreigner!". I am not sure where to start from, but I will start by telling something of this experience of mine. I ask for patience, since I am still at the beginning...and I understand little, almost nothing! I am an immigrant in a zambian soil, a stranger. I arrived in april and I started feeling my real self: a sister not born in this land. At last even to me the destiny of many that today travel for different reasons, particularly, my thought goes to our refugees! Stranger! Everything in the land you arrive is different, new, beautiful and upsetting at the same time, difficult to understand and sometime terrible.

Presently, I offer my services at St. Theresa's mission hospital, a hospital that is between the size of an ambulatory and a clinic. The area is close to Luanshya town, a place that I would define as my – *first love* – in this land.

When I arrived, I was taken to visit the Hospital and I felt bad: everything seemed dark, with light, old, too poor to be able to offer a service to the people. It seemed impossible for me to come back and work here. It took sometime....and I came back. *It is now my first love* because this small place, a small mission hospital, gives me the opportunity to be close to my brothers and sisters. It is for me the *door* to relationship. I am very happy about this opportunity, of teh welcoming of my sisters and the people that the Lord gives me to meet. I wish ot thank the sisters who allowed me to be here today.

Now, this same place is full of colour, the best colour, the colour of the people. Women with colourful *chitenge* or bright dresses. What a wonder! The *chitenge* is s imple piece of material that women use on the skirts or to carry children on the back, it is a simple rectngular piece of material but nice.

This place is full of smiles of people who, in spite of being sick, always answer "panono, panono", which menas "slowly, slowly".

This people appreciate very much our Country, Italy, because many people came here to work from Italy, in the past.. In these few months that I have been here, I was surprised to meet so many people, coming to visit projects which they sponsor, and eager to find out what more they could do. What a wonder! Good is diffusive, let us build bridges and not walls. Julaina, a friend from Assisi, after my arrival, when calling me on the telephone, use dot tell me: "we have sent a lot of money, where di it go?". This, because I used to tell her what I was seeing. Much good has been done, so much is being done by local people, particularly by trying to sensitize as far as possible, education and culture. Yet, there is so much to be done! There is much sufferings to alleviate, so much to be shared! Charity asks us to do much more, in order to give dignity to each single person.



*"Sr. Barbara with her patients"*

A Friar shouted at me: "there, a typical european spoiler!" I was curing his sores, at teh hospital and I had taken too much cotton to clean his sores. He was write: now i have learned to be very careful in using what is available. Also because, if there is something, the person who gets is fortunate! These days, for example, we are trying to find money to buy food for the patients, which is something that is taken for granted in any government hospital.

Here, it is not, nothing is to be taken for granted, as for example, to open the tap and expect water to come come out in order to was the instruments you use. Or water to clean the ward! Nothing is to be taken for granted, everything has to be conquered. Often people in need to be admitted in hospital, comes with nothing: no glad, plate, or water bottle...yet in the ward there is nothing of all thise to offer the new patients (suppose we had such utensils, it woul be a problem to wash them: no water, no soap because it finishes soon...) At the same time, I was tired of telling people to take medicines without water, or to ask the next bed to help. It came to my mind that empty containers from the Farmacy could help. Here, the medicines are not in small boxes but come in big plastic containers, with prescriptions or indications on the quantities to be taken. But the problem is where to find water and the children's ward is the only place: a way to discover that things are available and solutions can be found.

The hospital receives contribution from teh Government, and the service is free for the patients. Yet, the money is not enough to cover the expenditure of water, light, much less for buying food for the patients. In town things are a bit better, but here you have to pay.

One day, I found a young patient with smelling wounds, Vaison is his name; when the doctor visited him he had not been attended and the smell was strong. He told the doctore that he was burned with a hot pot, but the nurse soon explain that such punishment is given to those who still: family or village members carry our the procedure....



...I took care of him and it was not easy because of the strong smell which you can try to imagine.

Day after day, with long hours spent in the medicated water, I started cutting his skin and take away the rotten parts. I would then cover with clean bandages, but one day I got frightened because I started seeing the cartilage and bones.

He needed to be taken to the Theatre but there was no anaesthetic and so he had to wait for days and days and while waiting I would visit and clean him daily. I feared for his fingers, but everything went well, in the end: he was not amputated and he could return to his normal life, even though with two fingers paralyzed, little compared to what I feared, that he would lose his hands! He had planned to get married in October and he could postpone for next January.

To medicate wound has become my speciality even though without means, sometime, the process is very painful and bad smell make things worse, but this allows me to talk and share with people. But this I do with passion, to spend my time, energies, professional knowledge and affection for these loving brothers and sisters, who suffer for various reasons. I often think of the drop of water in the ocean, mentioned by Mother Theresa of Calcutta: "we can only pour our drops in this ocean of necessities that is open in front of me, but if I do not do it, the sea would be poorer."

**Sister Barbara Donini**



*Sr. Barbara with other nurses*

## PRAYER INTENTION



**JANUARY 16 – let's pray for the young sisters we shall meet in Assisi in preparation for their perpetual profession. May their commitment be sealed by the ring, the symbol of their readiness to become salvation for many brothers and sisters.**

They have been called to build the future and be obedient in prophesizing, in the path of Pope Francis who said: "I expect that you wake up the world, as the major note of your consecrated life is prophecy."

The prophet has been given by God the capability to look into the historic moment he lives in and to interpret the actual events.

He/she is the sentinel of the night watch who knows when the dawn is coming (Is. 21, 11-12).

The prophet stands by the poor and the helpless, for he knows that God stands at their side.



**FEBRUARY 16 – Let's pray for those who have problems walking the path of consecrated life. May they be enlightened and fend off the darkness of doubt, uncertainty and affliction. May they see the light waiting for them at the end of the path.**

Right from the beginning of our consecrated life we knew that our community would support us in order that we may produce good fruit. No matter how different our experiences may be: the need to feel the support of the sisters is always there, especially when the path becomes hard.

We have been asked to stand by those who are going through hard times and struggle to complete the journey. We must be their supportive companions. None of us should ever be left alone, nor experience the grip of coldness or indifference.

May this be a day of prayer for all our sisters, the ones close to us as well as the faraway ones. Also; "we, the strong ones must support the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rm. 15,1).



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